



Applying a Comprehensive Accessibility Lens To Your Workplace Practices

Updated September 2024

ABOUT TRUCKING HR CANADA

As a national, non-profit organization, Trucking HR Canada advances modern HR solutions for the trucking and logistics workforce. One of our strategic priorities is to make a company's job easier by delivering a comprehensive collection of up-to-date guides, reports, templates and more to support effective human resource management, recruitment, and retention efforts.

Visit truckinghr.com to find out more.

DISCLAIMER

The information contained within does not constitute legal advice. Trucking HR Canada, and all content contributors, bear no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of or related to the adoption, or decision not to adopt, any of the recommendations contained in this document.

WANT MORE?

Visit the **HR Resource Library** on Trucking HR Canada's website for up to date, practical HR management guides and tools designed specifically for trucking and logistics employers.

Employers participating in the 2024 THRC pilots of new tools can also refer to their [resource list](#) and are welcome to contact their designated advisor for consultation and guidance.

APPLYING A COMPREHENSIVE ACCESSIBILITY LENS TO YOUR WORKPLACE PRACTICES ¹

On a case-by-case basis, companies can provide an accommodation to employees who face disability-related barriers at work. However, it is important to focus on systemic approaches, or accessibility that is “woven into the fabric” of the employer’s workplace, as part of a solid ongoing commitment to inclusion.

This Accessibility Lens tool can be referenced when making decisions that directly or indirectly affect all people within the company’s eco-system – employees, contractors, clients, suppliers, visitors and members of the public. This is to ensure that the needs and issues faced by persons with disabilities are considered when making these decisions.

Remember These 4 Points (*downloadable*):

1. **WHY:** Designing workplaces (policies, practices, systems, spaces, services, etc.) so that they work for people with disabilities (and other barriers) results in systems that work better for everyone. The benefits of an intersectional accessibility lens include helping individuals and organizations to:
 - Become more aware of accessibility issues for persons with disabilities with multiple identities; and better understand factors in the workplace that unintentionally create inequities;
 - Have an inclusive, positive, and respectful work environment;
 - Identify how business operations could be tailored to be inclusive of people with disabilities;
 - Incorporate diverse perspectives of people with disabilities to strengthen the capacity of work teams;
 - Recruit and retain workers who are representative of your customers and communities; and
 - Develop and provide better results in services that are responsive to all clients and communities.
2. **WHAT:** When examining accessibility, consider potential barriers that people with a wide range of disabilities might experience.
 - ◀ *Tip:* Remember that some disabilities are visible and many are not; some are ongoing every day and some are episodic and unpredictable; some might have been declared by the individual while others might be kept private. Inclusive workplaces will try to be proactive in eliminating barriers before they might be experienced – this is the essence of accessibility.

Some common barriers will be related to one or more of these ten types of disability identified by the Canadian Survey on Disability:

¹ Some content adapted from Accessible Canada – *Standard on Employment: Public Review Draft*
See <https://accessible.canada.ca/can-asc-1-1/>

- Seeing
- Hearing
- Mobility
- Flexibility
- Dexterity
- Pain-related
- Learning
- Developmental
- Mental-health related
- Memory

3. **WHAT ELSE:** Accessibility extends beyond disabilities – intersecting identities matter. See the THRC information about Intersections – [*It's not just about disability: Understanding the Whole Person \(Intersectionality\)*](#).

Tip: Do not assume that one accessibility approach will automatically remove barriers for everyone equally. For example, offering an ASL (American Sign Language) version of important company communications is a good practice for accessibility, but be aware that ASL will be less familiar to many deaf francophones or to people who are newcomers to Canada from places such as Europe, South America and Australia. This does not mean you need to offer an infinite array of accessible formats; rather, you need to remain open to providing additional accommodation for individuals whose complex needs are not being met.

Consider the individual and societal effects of identities related to:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation and identity
- Race
- Indigenous status
- Age
- Education
- Language ability
- Newcomer status
- Faith / religion
- Family status and caregiving responsibilities
- Socioeconomic situation
- Etc.

4. **HOW:** The process for taking action on accessibility should also be inclusive of people who face barriers – “*Nothing about us without us.*” In fact, consultation is a requirement outlined in the [Accessible Canada Act](#) for federally regulated companies in the industry. Consider approaches such as:

- Including employees with disabilities on a working group to review your practices or develop new ones.
Tip: be mindful of tokenism or expecting PwDs to be advocates or take on more work.

- Conducting short consultations with your employees with disabilities about their lived experience in your workplace. These could be group discussions, short surveys, anonymous comments to a designated email, a series of interviews, etc.
Tip: It is good to have a balanced set of questions – what is working well, what might work better.
- Identifying ongoing opportunities for embedding accessibility into your operations. Keep a simple tracking sheet of barriers or requested accommodations, to flag trends and potentially save on cost and/or lost productivity by being accessible by design.
Tip: Track information such as the type of barrier/accommodation reported, the date of occurrence, the actions taken, and associated costs.
- Learning from the experience of other companies in the industry.
Tip: Read a few of the Accessible Canada Act reports that are posted online by trucking and logistics firms with more than 100 employees.
- Reaching out to agencies or external advisors with expertise in particular areas of relevance to you and your organization. See the [THRC Connector tool](#).

Applying an Accessibility Lens to Decision-Making

Download these steps to support your company’s success in applying an accessibility lens:

Putting it into action – An example:

ABC Transport is operating in a highly competitive labour market. To be able to reach out to potential applicants with disabilities and other possible barriers, they decided to improve the accessibility of their recruitment materials. They informed their decision-making by:

- Finding out about, and then implementing, accessibility best practices for websites.
- Asking some of their employees with disabilities to give candid feedback about the images, language, and ease of use of the recruitment materials.
- Updating their recruitment materials to reflect persons with disabilities and to explicitly invite applications from this population.
- Rewriting the materials for better readability – for people who face challenges with complex information or for whom English is not their first language.
- Providing contact information for an individual who can provide a more personalized, welcoming and supportive experience to potential applicants.
- Creating a standard process so they are more prepared to quickly provide information in accessible formats when requested.

1. Review these employment-related practices where barriers might be found:

- Internal communication and information sharing methods
- Meetings and events
- Information and technology systems used by employees and contractors
- Tools, equipment and work methods used by employees and contractors
- The workplace environment and facilities
- Emergency preparedness
- Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and approaches
- Employee and contractor experiences on the road and at customer sites
- Human resource practices such as recruitment, promotion, benefits, pay equity, performance management, engagement surveys, training and education practices for workers, etc.

Questions to ask about those employment practices:

How-to tip: It is best to seek input directly from persons with disabilities (PwD), particularly those with lived experience in your workplace. Remember that the [Accessible Canada Act](#) requires consultation with PwD. If your company lacks people to provide input, consider alternatives such as:

- Reviewing online sources of information about barriers
- Asking local agencies with expertise in persons with disabilities
- Networking with other employers about their experience
- Providing awareness information to other staff and then doing a brainstorming session to generate ideas – then confirm them in other ways.

- How does each aspect of this initiative, policy, program, procedure, process, or service affect persons with disabilities in general? People with physical disabilities? With disabilities that are not visible? As a manager? As a driver? As a non-driving worker?
- Next, how does it affect diverse disabilities and diverse identities, such as for:
 - Persons with episodic or multiple disabilities?
 - Women with disabilities?
 - Indigenous persons with disabilities? (First Nations, Inuit, Métis)
 - Racialized people with disabilities? (Black, South Asian, Chinese, etc.)
 - LGBTQ2+ people with disabilities?
 - Muslims and other religious minorities with disabilities?
 - Older employees with acquired disabilities?
 - Etc.
- Consider your organization's process for developing and implementing this practice. How do you enable the full and equitable participation of all workers in that process?

- Are diverse disabilities and diverse identities represented and involved throughout all stages of decision-making (such as development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation)?
 - If not, what could be contributing to that exclusion?
 - Who else is important to be brought into the process in a meaningful way? How might that happen?
 - Are there opportunities to involve partners? For example, customers or suppliers that are committed to disability inclusion; or agencies that support your outreach, onboarding or training activities.
- In asking these questions, do my experiences, biases, and assumptions limit my understanding of the impact on people with disabilities in general and specifically people with multiple disabilities and diverse identities?

2. Applying an accessibility lens to other business practices:

- Built environment
 - Ensure that workspaces and the work environment are accessible for all.
 - For example: Facilities that are visited by external individuals such as clients, suppliers, inspectors, and other visitors
- Communication and inclusive messaging
 - Provide barrier free access for the public, clients and employees to all the communications that the company produces for this audience.
 - For example: Information, websites, forms that reflect persons with disabilities – used with clients, suppliers, general public
- Information and communication technologies
 - Review the various technological tools used to send, store, create, share or exchange information.
 - For example: Accessibility built into websites, alternative methods of providing / accessing information for business transactions, telephone or other interactions, etc.
- Procurement
 - Ensure that accessibility is considered at the beginning of the buying process.
 - For example: Explicit preference for suppliers who can ensure accessible products and services, bidding processes that are accessible to people with various types of disabilities, bias-aware processes for reviewing bids.
- Designing and delivering programs and services
 - When designing and delivering the company's internal and external programs and services, accessibility considerations must be part of the process right from the very start.

FOR PILOT – September 2024

- For example: Use the questions in the various sections of this lens throughout the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages; engage with individuals with disabilities to be able to reflect their lived experience with barriers and best practices.
- Transportation
 - Take into consideration barriers to operation and provide accessible methods, materials and equipment to employees, and customers / suppliers as applicable, as needed.
 - For example: Work schedules that do not pose barriers to people with disabilities (including mental health, vision limitations, episodic pain, etc.), equipment to make work tasks easier, employee transportation (taxis etc.) that are accessible to people with visible and non-visible disabilities.

For More Information:

- These [THRC tools](#):
 - *Accessible Canada Act – A Sample Accessibility Plan*
 - *Invisible Disabilities*
 - *Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy – A Sample*
 - *Reflecting AODA and Best Practices: An Employer Compliance Checklist*
- Sample government sources, depending on jurisdiction:
 - *Accessibility Standards Canada* [[Accessibility Standards Canada](#)]
 - [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)